

# Entering the Promised Land

by Zac Poonen

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*The Christian life is a race and a boxing match that requires self-control, discipline, and a healthy fear of God in order to win and enter the life of victory.*

**Duration:** 58:15

**Scripture:** Hebrews 3:12

**Topics:** "Christian Discipline", "Spiritual Warfare"

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## Description

This sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the significance of Old Testament events mentioned in the New Testament as warnings for believers. It highlights the need for believers to run the Christian race with perseverance, discipline their bodies, and avoid being disqualified by sin. The sermon warns against turning the grace of God into a license for sin and encourages believers to contend earnestly for the faith, fight against false teachings, and possess the land of victory in their spiritual lives.

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## Transcript

I thought of sharing with you an Old Testament event that is repeated three times in the New Testament as a warning. I have mentioned this before and if you heard me you probably remember it. The first mention is in 1 Corinthians in chapter 10.

Now when one Old Testament event is mentioned three times in the New Testament it must have some significance. We can't think of many Old Testament events that are mentioned in the New Testament at all. There are Old Testament verses that are quoted in the New Testament, a number of them, but an Old Testament event mentioned three times as a warning for believers.

Paul is speaking here in 1 Corinthians 9 and verse 24. Don't you know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize. Run in such a way that you may win.

He's talking about the Christian life as a race, everybody takes part, but he says every one of you must run in such a way that you can win. This is a unique race where everybody can come first. That's the meaning here.

You run in such a way that you win the race and that applies to everybody who is listening to it. But if you want to win, since you're everyone who competes in the games, exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath or today we'd say a gold medal, but we an imperishable one.

And therefore I run in such a way as not without aim. I box in such a way as not beating the air. The Christian life is pictured here as a boxing match with the devil, a race that we have to run to complete, reach the finishing line, and in order to get there, I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly after I preach to others, I myself should be disqualified.

I don't know how many believers feel like Paul felt that there is a possibility that I could preach to others and be disqualified at the end. And it's because he felt like that, what did he do to avoid being disqualified? It says he disciplined his body and the Living Bible says, I make my body do what it should do and not what it wants to do. The parts of our body, our eyes want to look at many things, our tongue wants to speak many things, our hand wants to do many things, but he says I make my body do what it should be doing and not what it wants to do.

That's a very legitimate paraphrase of verse 27 and he says there that if I don't do that, I can be the greatest preacher telling other people about so many things and finally like in many Olympic races you find the fellow who came first is disqualified. He thought he came first and he was disqualified. Somewhere along the way he crossed the track or did some foul and in this connection he says, you got to ignore that chapter division and move on, I don't want you to be unaware that our Israeli fathers were under the cloud and all passed through the sea.

Now remember this is in the context of my preaching to others and then being disqualified and he's talking about the Israelites who were in Egypt, were redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, they went through the Red Sea which is a picture of baptism we read in verse 2 they were baptized into Moses, the cloud symbolizing the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the sea symbolizing water baptism. It's very exact the Old Testament picture. They could only be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb and that's why we begin and immediately after that they were baptized symbolically in water and symbolically with the Holy Spirit from heaven and then they ate the same spiritual food which speaks of our reading God's Word and drinking of the Spirit from the rock which was Christ.

In spite of all this, God was not well pleased with most of them. So he's talking about people who are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, baptized in water, baptized in the Holy Spirit. God is not well pleased with them.

I think there are very few Christians who really believe that, especially those who claim to have a baptism in the Holy Spirit. Most people who claim to have that experience feel that I'm one of God's special children and his blue-eyed boy or girl and nothing can happen to me now and yet it's a such people it's referred to here and God was not well pleased with most of them but they were laid low in the wilderness. Remember, even in context of what he's saying earlier, I can preach to others and be disqualified and all these things verse 6 happened as an example for us that we should not crave for evil things as they craved and we should not be idolaters as they were.

The people sat down to eat and drink, stood up to play. We should not act immorally as they did and 23,000 fell and we should not tempt the Lord as some of them did and were destroyed by the serpents. We should not grumble as some of them did and were destroyed by the destroyer.

Now, do we see these things as dangers for us? Craving for things, verse 6, which God is forbidden, the worship of self or money, idolatry, immoral immorality in our private life and tempting God, grumbling, verse 10. All these things, verse 11, happened to them as an example and they are written for our instruction upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Now, Paul says, I can preach to others and be

disqualified and he says, if you sit there and think that it'll never happen to me, then this word is for you, verse 12.

Let him who thinks that he will never fall like that, he will stand until the end, take heed lest he falls. It's the one who's absolutely confident that he will never fall, he's going to fall first. But, you don't have to fall because no temptation has overtaken us, which is common to all men.

Now, the other place where the same Old Testament example is quoted is in Hebrews in chapter 3. In Hebrews 3, again, it's a warning to believers. I find many believers go to the scriptures for promises, some go further and find out the commandments, but there are warnings in scripture for believers. Take care, brethren, believers, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart that'll make you fall away from the Living God.

I don't know how many believers take that word seriously, to take care, lest, we're not talking about an evil, immoral heart, or a heart which is covetous, or full of bitterness against others. It's an unbelieving heart. This is the one passage where we read of unbelief as a great sin, and it's called an evil heart.

Now, very few believers think of unbelief as an evil, and it's here called an evil, unbelieving heart that makes us fall away from the Living God. What is it that a believer may not believe in? Does he stop believing in the death of Christ? I don't think there's even a nominal Christian would be in that danger of not believing that... all the nominal Christians in the world are not even converted. They all believe that Jesus Christ is God, they all believe Jesus died for the sins of the world, they all believe Jesus rose again and ascended to heaven, and then He's coming back.

What is this unbelieving heart? I think it's referring to an unbelief in the warnings of God, that when God warns, I don't believe it's really gonna happen, it's not gonna happen to me. That's what we saw over there, you know, in the previous passage. Make sure there's no idolaters among you, or don't grumble because they were destroyed, and I can take that and say, I don't believe that, and suppose I grumble as if God will just throw me out because I grumble.

That's what I mean by an unbelieving heart, that doesn't really believe that what God says He means. But encourage one another, because in the previous verses, He's talking about warnings. Verse 8, don't harden your heart, as they provoked me in the day of trial in the wilderness, when your father has tried me, and I was angry, verse 10, with this generation, because they always go astray in their heart.

And He goes on to say, we become partakers of Christ, verse 14, only if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end. Now some people think of that as a dreadful thing, you mean I've got to hold on to Jesus till the end of my life before God makes me a partaker of His. Who's the one who speaks like that? Think of a man who's getting married on his wedding day.

Does he think, oh, do you mean I have to be married to this girl till the end and never leave her? He doesn't love her at all. If he really loves her, he'd be delighted. So when you think that, you mean I have to hold on to Christ until the very end, and I won't be made partakers of Him, that shows that that person doesn't have a loving relationship with Christ at all.

There are multitudes like this, and I feel that as our churches increase in number, there are people who can creep in unnoticed, like Jude says, and we'll see that in a moment, and there's a great danger of people coming in who don't take God's word seriously. And so it says today, if you hear his voice, verse

15, don't harden your hearts. For who were the ones who provoked him? Indeed, those who had come out of Egypt.

See the example there, the people in Egypt are, there's a picture of unbelievers, the people who came out of Egypt in the Old Testament are a picture of believers, baptized in the Red Sea, the cloud baptism in the Holy Spirit, and then it says they provoked the Lord, and he was angry with them, verse 17. What we read in 1 Corinthians 10 was God was not well pleased with them. That's not such a strong word, but here is a stronger word, He was angry with them, with those who sinned, their bodies fell in the wilderness, and he swore that they would not enter into his rest, that was into Canaan, and so they did not enter because of their unbelief.

Unbelief in what? They didn't believe that the threats of God were real, that what he threatened to do, he would do. They sort of took advantage of it and said, well, it's not really going to be like that. Is it possible that believers are also like that? When God says something, we don't really believe that it's really going to be like that.

Let me give you just one one verse, you ask yourself, whether you, and be absolutely honest, not with me, but with yourself, and see whether you believe this verse. Do you really believe that it will be exactly like Jesus said? Turn with me to Matthew chapter 12. Matthew chapter 12 and verse 36 and 37.

My conviction is the vast majority, I pray probably ninety percent of believers, do not believe Matthew 12 36. So I ask you, ask yourself whether you believe it, whether you belong to the ten percent of believers who believe it. I say to you, every careless, useless word that men shall speak, they will give an account in the day of judgment.

Do you believe it? It was many years after I was born again that I really believed that I had to give an account for every useless word I ever spoke. And I've spoken a lot of useless words as a believer by the time I began to take that seriously. But it made me take it very, very much, it made me extremely serious with my conversation after I believed just this one verse.

That one verse, if you believe it, it'll purify your conversation. And the next verse, in the day of judgment you're going to be justified by your words, the words that you spoke, and you're going to be condemned by the words that you spoke. But you say, hey, I thought we are justified by faith.

That's right. And that's why James has to clarify that a faith that does not produce works is a dead faith. All the doctrines may be there that you believe, but it's like a dead man who's got his ten fingers and ten toes and two eyes and two ears and every part of the body is there, but it's dead.

So faith, which has all the correct doctrines, can still be dead. No finger missing, no toe missing, it's all there, but it's dead. So we are justified by faith, but I don't see a contradiction between that and this verse which says you're justified by your words.

I believe God. So these are the warnings you find which the Israelites did not take seriously. And God said you will not enter the land.

They thought no, he'd finally sort of be merciful and let them enter in, but he didn't. All those 600,000 men over the age of 20, not one of them entered except Joshua and Caleb who believed and entered in. So this is the second place in the New Testament where that is, that warning comes through.

And it says in Hebrews 4, let's turn back to Hebrews, therefore, quoting the example of these Israelites who did not enter Canaan, let us fear. This is another thing I have a big question in my mind about, as to how many believers fear. We're almost taught that we should not fear at all.

We shouldn't fear anything in the world, but we must fear God. To me, I was greatly challenged many years ago when I read about why God the Father answered the prayers of Jesus. There was a reason.

There was a time at the tomb of Lazarus where Jesus said, Father, you always hear my prayer. There was never a prayer that Jesus prayed that was not answered. We sometimes wonder why some of our prayers are not answered.

Of course, one reason is it may not be God's will. But I find a tendency among believers to pray, and if it's not answered, oh well, it's not God's will. They never think of the possibility that it may have been God's will, but it may have been some defect in them that hindered the prayer from being answered, either a lack of faith or a lack of fear of God.

Most believers pray for many things and they're not grounded. Invariably, they assume it's not the will of God. In other words, it's never my fault.

It's always not the will of God, and that's why it's not answered. I accept it, and I can go through life like that, and I can live in a tremendous deception. There are prayers that probably God wanted to answer, but I always ruled it out saying, well, it's not God's will.

It may have been unbelief, or it may have been a lack of the fear of God. I'll show you this verse, Hebrews 5, 7. It says about Jesus, in the days of his flesh, he offered up prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the one who was able to save him from death, from spiritual death, and he was heard because of his godly fear. That's the thing that struck home to my heart, that there was a godly fear in the heart of Jesus that made the Father always answer his prayer.

Perhaps that is the reason why some of our prayers are not answered. It may be the will of God, but that fear and trembling that should characterize even a believer may not be there. Maybe we become so familiar with God our Father.

It's true we call him our Father, and we need not be insecure. We need to be secure in him, but one of the things that a genuine knowledge of God as a Father will produce is a healthy fear. There's no contradiction there.

It's not the fear that he'll kill me or send me to hell. No, no, no, no. It's a healthy fear, fear of God.

See, in 1 Peter, in chapter 1, it says, if you call him Father, and we do. In the Old Testament, they could not address him as Father. He's talking about the danger of an unholy familiarity with God the Father.

1 Peter 1 17. If you address as Father, the one who impartially judges according to every man's work, what should you do? Conduct yourself in fear during the entire time of your stay on earth. We've always thought knowing him as Father means no fear.

No, it says here, if you know him as Father, you fear. I've seen through the years that the ones who know God the most are the ones who fear and reverence him the most. It's the ones who know God the least who reverence him the least.

So Jesus' prayers were heard because of his godly fear. So turning back to Hebrews 4.1, it says, let us fear. Let us fear lest a promise has been given to us of entering into this rest, and we read from the previous verses that rest is the land of Canaan.

Verse 18 of chapter 3, they could not enter his rest, which is the land of Canaan is called the land of rest. And there's a promise given to us of entering into this rest, this life of rest, which Canaan pictured. Any one of you should come short of it.

That means you remain in the wilderness, and you don't end up in Canaan where you should be. We have had the good news preached to us also, and the word good news here is the gospel. Chapter 4 verse 2, we have had the gospel preached to us just as they also.

Who are the they? Those who missed out on entering the land of Canaan. But that did not profit them, because they did not unite themselves with the two people who had faith, that is Joshua and Caleb. They didn't unite by faith with them.

So from this verse, what is the gospel according to Hebrews 4 verse 1 and 2? The gospel is not Christ died for our sins. Not here anyway. Here the gospel is that you can enter the land of Canaan, that you can enter the life of victory.

That is the full gospel. Christ died for our sins is the beginning. Let me read that to you again.

There is a promise, chapter 4 verse 1, of entering into his rest, and that's the land of Canaan. Let us fear, lest we should come short of it, like those other people who also had the gospel preached to them. And what was the gospel? That they can enter Canaan.

This is what is missing in Christendom today. The gospel has been cut into two. So let me turn you to the Old Testament passage where the gospel was, it says the gospel was preached to them in the Old Testament.

Where was it preached to them? Turn with me to Exodus and you'll see where the gospel was preached to these people in the Old Testament. And then we can apply it to us. Exodus in chapter 3, God said to Moses, verse 15, Exodus 3.15, Thus shall you say to the sons of Israel, Lord God of your fathers has sent me.

Verse 16, Go gather the elders of Israel together and say to them, and this is what he used to say to them in verse 17. Here's the gospel, two parts of it. I will bring you out of the affliction of Egypt.

I will bring you into the land of the Canaanite, Hittite, Ammonite, Perisite and the land flowing with milk and honey. Here's the full gospel. I will bring you out of Egypt and I'll bring you into Canaan.

That is where the gospel was preached to them so clearly. To the elders in Israel, it's a clear promise of God. I will bring you out of Egypt.

I'll bring you into Canaan. The full gospel and it's called the gospel as we saw in Hebrews 4.2 but it did not benefit them because they didn't fear. They thought it'd be automatic and that is given as a warning to us that we might miss out also today on this life of victory or the land of rest whichever way you look at it because we don't fear.

We don't have faith and sometimes you know people say, many times people say, if God's promised something it'll definitely take place. It has to take place because God has promised it. Well here I'll show you a promise that did not take place.

He gathered the elders of Israel chapter 3 verse 16 and to those elders of Israel God said, I will bring you into, I'll take you out of Egypt and I'll bring you into Canaan. One part of it was fulfilled and the other part was not fulfilled. So who said that anything that God promises is automatically fulfilled? It's not.

One part was fulfilled and one part was not. It's like when the two blind men came to Jesus and they said they wanted their eyes open and Jesus said, do you believe I can do this for you? And like I've often said, if one of them said, Lord you can open one eye that's all you've got. According to your faith be it unto you.

You'll have one eye open and the other person says, Lord I believe you can open both eyes. He goes out with both eyes open and these two people when they come out they wonder how did this guy get both eyes open and he got only one eye. Is God partial? No.

He had faith that Jesus would open both eyes and according to your faith be it unto you. It's the same word spoken to both. It's the same here.

I'll bring you out of Egypt. I will take you into Canaan. Now there's some people who didn't even have faith to come out of Egypt.

They didn't put the blood outside the door. They say, oh nothing's gonna happen. We are okay.

The angel of death came and killed the firstborn. So even the first part was not fulfilled. But there were some people who had faith for the first part.

They put the blood and they trusted God and he fulfilled the first part of that promise and took them out of Egypt. But the second part of that gospel, I will bring you to Canaan, was not fulfilled. This is the context in which we read in Hebrews 4 and chapter 1. Let us fear and he goes on to say in chapter 4 and verse 9. There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God and that Sabbath rest is this life of victory.

It's called a land of rest in chapter 3 and chapter 4 and this was the Sabbath that Jesus referred to when he said, come to me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest and take my yoke upon you Matthew 11 29 and you shall find a rest unto your souls and that rest in our soul is a life of victory where there's not a conflict and a battle going on all the time in my soul. There's a rest there. In that context it says in Hebrews 4 and 9. There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God and God can do it if I trust him.

What was it that hindered the Israelites from entering the land of Canaan? Was it because they were not strong enough? Were Joshua and Caleb stronger than the other 10 spies and all the other 600,000? Not at all. In fact they conquered the land of Canaan when they were 80 and 85 years old. They trusted God.

These other people they looked at the giants and they said no no no we can't conquer them. We're like grasshoppers before these giants. That's exactly what most Christians say when they are presented with the gospel of a victorious life.

You can overcome sin. That sin which so easily besets you. Whatever it is.

Is it anger? You can overcome it. Is it sexually dirty patterns of thinking? You can overcome it. Is it an unforgiving spirit towards someone who has done terrible evil to you? You keep that grudge in your heart.

You can overcome it. You can get rid of it and most Christians say no no no no it's too difficult. You can give thanks in everything.

You can rejoice always. You can obey the word which says do all things without grumbling and complaining and most Christians say no it's impossible. It's impossible.

The giants are too big. I've heard people who have unconverted wives who say you don't know the type of wife I have. It's impossible to live an overcoming life with her.

She's the giant and this man is like a grasshopper who can't overcome. Whereas Joshua and Caleb said these people are like bread for us. They had a completely different perspective to that situation.

The same Giants but they looked at God and they said these people are not stronger than God. Is there any lust in my body that is stronger than the Holy Spirit? Anything. However many years I may have been a slave to it.

There is no lust in my body that is stronger than the Holy Spirit. The flesh fights against the spirit. The spirit fights against the flesh and I stand in between deciding who's going to win.

The one I yield to, the one I open the door to is going to win. I can't I can't fight any lust in my own strength. The Giants are too big for me but by the power of the Holy Spirit every last one of them can come under my feet.

It has to begin with that faith. I believe that the Giants can be overcome. The third time this warning is repeated again in the book of Jude.

It's something interesting that the same event in the Old Testament is repeated three times by three different scripture writers. Corinthians, Hebrews and then Jude. In the book of Jude you read and here is Jude is it's interesting how he says in verse 3 I was planning to write about our common salvation.

So when Jude went to write he wanted to write something like the episode of the Romans. Let me explain salvation you know justification by faith and overcoming sin and life in the spirit. I was going to write about the common salvation but somehow the Holy Spirit prompted me to change that and I felt because when I looked around at the church I felt the need was I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you fight earnestly for that faith which was once for all delivered to the Saints.

Do you sense a passion like that but particularly after coming to a church like this New Covenant Church a passion to fight for the truths of the New Covenant. Not fight in a worldly way but fight that the way the Apostle Paul fought for the truth of the gospel and how great men of God through the years Martin Luther and many others fought for the truth of the gospel even if they had to lay down their lives for it. Contend earnestly for that faith which is once for all delivered to the Saints and it was not just the forgiveness of sins it is overcoming the Giants as well and he says the reason why I mentioned this is because in the church certain persons have crept in unnoticed and that has happened in many churches.

We have had to fight it in CFC churches in in India. People creeping in unnoticed who what do they do? They turn the grace of God and let me paraphrase it into a license to commit sin. They've turned the grace

of God into licentiousness.

Before that they were a little afraid of committing sin but now they've heard this perverted message of the grace of God and it has become a license for sinning. It's like in the days before you had a driving license if you got into a car and drove you were afraid where you'd be caught by the police because you didn't have a license and if you sneakily took your dad's car out and drove you'd be scared but once you got your driving license you're not scared. Now you can drive freely.

That's the meaning here. There was a time when you were under law when you were a little scared to sin but now you've got this license called grace. Now you can sin as much as you like.

The grace of God has become a license to commit sin. Ungodly people have come in and that's why you see that the standard of life of many God-fearing Jews is way above the standard of life of many so-called born again Christians in many many churches. Why is that? Because they've turned the grace of God into licentiousness.

You know there's a question that all asks in Romans in chapter 3. Romans in chapter 3 and verse 1. What advantage does the Jew have? You ever thought of that? What advantage? None of us are Jews or we were not born into Jewish families. What advantage did the Jew have over you and me? This is it. Great in every respect.

They had verse 2 the oracles of God which taught them the law, which taught them to fear, which taught them that if a woman caught in adultery she has to be stoned to death. That was a law. Women were scared to commit adultery.

You think that fear is there among born-again Christians today? It isn't. It is not. That's why you have adultery and fornication among so-called born-again Christians in every denomination.

What advantage did the Jew have? Great. They had the oracles of God that taught them the fear of God. There was a law.

Let me give you another example. There was a law in the Old Testament. I don't know whether you know about this law in Deuteronomy and Deuteronomy in chapter 21.

How many of you remember reading this in the Old Testament? Deuteronomy 21 verse 18. If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son who will not obey his father or his mother, that means despite their disciplining him and chastising him, they still won't listen to him. He still won't listen to them.

You know what the father and mother was supposed to do under the Old Testament law? Bring him to the elders of the city, verse 19, and say to the elders, this son of ours is rebellious. He gets drunk. All he does is eat, doesn't obey us and all the men of the city shall stone your son to death.

This is an Old Testament law. What advantage did the Jew have? Great in every respect. They learned to fear God.

Where do you have children growing up like that in Christian homes today? They are taught the grace of God. False grace. A license to do as you like, live as you like, grow up in immorality.

And there are people who crept into every born-again church for church preaching in the new birth and introduced this. And that's why you find such a shallow state of affairs. I traveled around so many Christian

churches from the time I was converted for 16 years in India.

All the denominations. I got so fed up with every one of them and fed up with my own defeated life, I said, Lord, I can't be a part of any one of these churches. I want something better.

And that's how we started CFC. We have to see the state of Christendom today. It's one massive Babylonian structure.

False grace. And that's because it says these people have crept in, in Jude, it says they crept in unnoticed. You know there's a verse in the Gospel of Mark which says, Jesus used a parable here in Mark's Gospel.

He's talking about his second coming. He says in Mark 13 and verse 33, take heed and keep on the alert because you don't know when the Son of Man will come. It's like a man away on a journey, Mark 13 verse 34.

He leaves his house and listen to this. This is the church. This is Jesus.

He's left his house and he's put his slaves in charge. These are the elders and assigning to each one his task and he commands the doorkeeper to stay on the alert. Every church must have at least one doorkeeper among the elders who's determined not to let these people preaching false grace to creep in.

See that's what Jude says. How did this teaching of false grace come into the church? Jude, certain people, Jude verse 4, have crept in. While the doorkeeper was looking the other way, they crept in unnoticed.

It's a picture of some fellow who got in, wasn't really converted, didn't take sin seriously and the doorkeepers were slack and that person began to share in the church, not just got in, but he began to share and the doorkeepers were asleep. They crept in unnoticed and they proclaimed this message of grace as a license to sin and then he says the same example from the Old Testament. I want to remind you, Jude verse 5, that after the Lord saved his people from Egypt once for all, once saved, always saved from Egypt, then what happened after that? He destroyed those who did not believe.

The same example is given there again, three times in the New Testament. You were brought out of Egypt and you took God's Word lightly. So what advantage did the Jews have? The Jews never knew a thing about the grace of God.

Think of Peter, James and John. For 33 years they were drilled in the fear of God, the fear of God. You dare not be disobedient and stubborn against your parents, you'll be stoned to death and whatever it is, that's the only way to keep them holy by threats of if you commit adultery you'll be stoned to death and so there was a fear of God that kept them from sin and then one day they heard the message of the grace of God.

Then they could understand the grace of God in his proper perspective. It's not something that's going to lower them below the what the fear of God had brought into them but raise them higher. But that is not the way most Christians have understood the grace of God because when a Christian, you think of a child born into a Christian family, he doesn't know anything about the fear of God.

He reads about from the very first day, he knows about Jesus, how good Jesus is, let the little children come to me. He doesn't know anything about the fear which the Jewish children had and then he grows up and his understanding of the grace of God is God is just a loving grandfather sitting up there allowing you to do whatever you like. This is the condition of Christendom and then preachers up there talking about grace.

We are living in that time and even though even churches that started well, if the doorkeeper is slack, these people can come in even now. I found that in our own church in Bangalore. I find I have to wage a constant war from the pulpit against all these people who try to creep in, who are not serious about sin, who just like to listen to a good message.

We're not excited that a lot of people like to listen to a good message. It says in Mark 6 that Herod loved to hear John the Baptist. Now you think if a man likes to hear John the Baptist, he must be a very spiritually minded man.

Far from it. It's very interesting to see that passage there in Mark 6 where what it says, the Holy Spirit says in Mark 6 verse 20, Herod was afraid of John knowing that he was a righteous and a holy man and kept him safe. So even though he had kept John in prison, he kept John in prison because his wife was upset with John the Baptist saying, you married your brother's wife.

That's sin. So Herodias' wife had a grudge and that's why Herod put John in prison but he made sure that John was comfortable in prison and he used to go and listen to him. It says he used to enjoy listening to him.

Have you ever pictured how that happened? Herod would come from the palace, go down to John's prison cell and say, tell me something and Herod would preach to him and John the Baptist would preach to him. This is not talking about when John is in the wilderness. Herod didn't go out there.

It says Herod enjoyed listening to him and John is in a prison cell and the king goes down and talks to him and he likes to listen to him and he was also perplexed by a lot of things he heard. But then one day, it says just two verses later, at a feast, at a banquet, his illegal wife's daughter Salome came in and danced with her immodest dresses and he enjoyed that as well. This is Herod.

He can sit and enjoy John the Baptist's fiery message one day in the morning and in the evening he can watch this dirty movie on television. These immodestly dressed women and he enjoys both of them and that's why you later on he's even willing to chop off John's head. So the mere fact that somebody comes to our church and enjoys listening to this powerful message on repentance proves nothing.

By their fruit you shall know them, not by their sitting in the church and nodding their heads. We must not be deceived. The doorkeeper must be on the alert.

That people don't creep into our churches unnoticed, who don't have a holy reverence and fear for God, don't have a hatred for sin, who say anything that will lower the seriousness of sin in the eyes of people. Paul warned Timothy that in the last days preachers would tickle the ears of people, telling them what they want to hear. And so he says, because it's going to be like that, preach the word, 2nd Timothy 4, verse 2, in season out of season, because people are going to, time will come when they want to, verse 3, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in according to their own desires, who will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.

The charismatic world today is full of this, a lot of myths, not leading to people to be Christ-like, getting more and more involved in politics and the things of the world, and they're not talking against sin anymore. They're talking about miracles and signs and all that type of stuff. Yeah, it's what people want to hear.

So Paul tells Timothy, you preach the word, verse 2, in season and out of season means when you feel like it and when you don't feel like it. That's a great exhortation for preachers. Preach when you feel like it and preach when you don't feel like it.

Preach when you're ready to preach and preach when you're not ready to preach as well. Always be ready and with great patience, rebuke, reprove, exhort with great patience and instruction, because that's the only way to protect and preserve the church from all these other people who creep in and want to proclaim false grace. We have to be very careful.

We have to be very careful in listening. I have been very careful through the years to listen to words that are being preached from CFC pulpits to see if there's any deviation, a slight deviation, from the truth. It can lead the church far away from where it should be a few years from now.

In the land of Canaan, one last thing I want to say is the land of Canaan is a life of victory. There are three places, Egypt, the wilderness, and Canaan. In Egypt they are unbelievers and all those who come out of Egypt are either in the wilderness or in the land of Canaan.

The wilderness is life of constant struggle, up and down and up and down and up and down. Then you come to the cross, you know, they cross two bits of water. One is the Red Sea, then the other is the River Jordan.

The Red Sea speaks of water baptism. The crossing the River Jordan speaks of death to self. That's how you enter the life of life of victory.

That's where Jesus was baptized in the River Jordan. Symbolically he was saying, I give myself over to death believing that the Father will raise me up. But once you enter the land of life of victory, the picture there is so clear.

The whole land is given to us, but you cannot kill all the giants in one shot. You can kill only one giant at a time. And that's why we need, it says, the sin which so easily besets us.

Tackle that. The Goliath that is standing in front of you, tackle him. Make sure that one sin comes down under your feet.

Because once you've killed a giant, you've got a hold of his territory. That's yours. And then you move on to the next.

Then there's another giant whom you didn't see before that. So you don't see the other giant until you're finished with the one you're dealing with now. Teaching us that our body, which is the land of Canaan, has got a whole lot of giants ruling it.

Various types of things that are contrary to the Spirit of Christ. The ones you see, you can kill. But even if you killed all the ones you see, remember there are still giants further north in the land of Canaan whom you haven't seen.

And you will see them when you finish with the giants you've seen. That's what the Bible speaks about. Conscious sin and unconscious sin.

Conscious sin is what I know to be sin. Unconscious sin is the areas of un-Christ-likeness in my life that I'm not even aware of. But I will not be aware of it until I deal with what I see, what is conscious.

I kill the giant I see, then I can move forward and I see another giant. Then I kill him and I move forward and I discover, hey there's another giant there. And like that they keep possessing the land of Canaan.

At the end of Joshua's life, the Lord said to Joshua, there still remains much land to be possessed. In Joshua's entire life, they killed a number of giants and many of the giants still remained. They did not, God's will was that they should conquer the whole land.

That applying that to our lives, God's will is that every un-Christ-like habit in our life must be conquered and brought under the feet of Christ. Every thought brought in subjection, because that's God's will. But that depends on how radically we're going to fight against the giants and how humble we are to acknowledge that there are still things in our life which we haven't seen and which we want to see.

We don't sit back and say, well I've overcome all that I know. That's fine. There's a whole lot of other things that you don't know in your life which are un-Christ-like.

You must ask God to give you light on them. So there's some very wonderful truths that we can learn from the land of Canaan as a life of victory. They had to kill the giants themselves with God helping them.

And it's an amazing story how God even one day stopped the sun ones to help them kill the giants. So the wonderful things God can do for us, if you're serious about possessing the land of Canaan, this three-times warning given to us in the New Testament, say Lord I want to possess the land. I want to experience the full gospel.

I believe God will help us for that is his will for us. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Heavenly Father, we just want to pray that these truths will sink deep into our hearts and that we may not forget them.

They may not remain as theory, but the words will sink deep and produce fruit. Bring us into that rest, Father. In Jesus name, amen.

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